

**Illinois Early Learning Council  
Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee**

**Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>**

**10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

James R. Thompson Center (JRTC)

100 West Randolph Street

Chicago, IL 60601

9th floor (room 9-036)

**Meeting Notes**

**Meeting Participants**

*In-Person:* Ben Boer, Jana Fleming, Nicole Gillis, Elliot Regenstein, Bob Spatz, Julie Spielberger, Teri Talan

*Phone:* David Alexander, Bernard Cesarone, Kim Collins, Angela Farwig, Serah Fatani, Dan Harris, Harriette Herrera, TeeNeka Jones, Lauri Morrison-Frichtl, Michael Stelmach, Tom Szyrka, Dawn Thomas, Joellyn Whitehead, Cindy Zumwalt

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

**2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the 1/28 meeting were formally approved.

**3. JSI - Q3 Deliverables**

Michael Stelmach, Project Manager for JSI, provided a brief overview of key findings and recommendations related to the technical architecture and system design; risk analysis and governance; and Head Start review.

**a. Technical Architecture and System Design**

***Overarching Themes***

A few broad concepts or overarching themes that apply to the technical architecture:

- Privacy and security - key concerns and touch many parts of the system
- Organization and role-based hierarchy - necessary to support the many agencies, programs, and different staff that will use the system, especially as it relates to privacy and security (i.e., will need to know who people are, what organizations they work for, and what access privileges they have)
- Interoperability - key requirement if collecting data and potentially sharing data with other systems across the state
- Service oriented - suggests that the system is broken up into functional components that can be rolled in or out as required (modular)
- Federated vs. centralized - different models of data collection and management with the unified system most likely being a combination of both models
- Standards-based approach - as it relates to both developing the architecture and data collection to promote consistency and effective communication (important use of Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) throughout this process)

### ***Technical Architecture Conceptual Framework***

Conceptual framework includes **System Users** (early childhood community in the broadest sense, such as teachers, administrators, staff in support roles, etc.); **Business Services** (point of access for system users, such as a dashboard or a more involved tool); **Core Services** (internal capabilities of the system that help it operate and be managed effectively); **Data Stores** (oriented toward CEDS and also includes meta-data or aggregate data stores); **Data Exchange** (complex module that would support batch file exchange and even real-time data exchange at some point in the future); and **Legacy Systems** (16 or so existing systems and 6 planned systems).

### ***Modular View***

Technical Architecture and System Design deliverable has a detailed review of each of the modules. Given the modularity of the technical architecture, it allows for flexibility to decide which box gets implemented. This phased approach takes into consideration budget limitations and resource availability.

### ***Prioritizing Unified System Capabilities***

Certain constraints have been identified through this process, such as budget; outdated technology of Legacy systems; poor data quality and limited data availability; and use of multiple unique identifiers. These issues suggest a need for a phased implementation for the Unified System. The key is to maintain the modular approach to building out the system and not compromise the ability to add modules at a later time.

### ***Prioritizing System Integration Efforts***

There is also a need for an effort to prioritize which systems will be integrated and which data will be collected from these systems. In the Q2 analysis, JSI reviewed each of the systems and determined capabilities. JSI also did a review of CEDS and the key policy questions to describe which CEDS data supported the policy questions. This will serve as key input in making decisions about prioritizing which systems should be integrated first and which policy questions should be answered first.

## **b. Risk Analysis and Governance**

Involved looking at the risks associated with a systems integration effort as envisioned by the unified system planning project and to develop a set of recommendations for how the affiliated programs and agencies should work together.

- Unique Identifier - Several unique identifiers are used in the existing systems. Most typically they are randomly generated numbers so do not serve a purpose for other systems. Current efforts underway, such as with Recipient Identification Number at DHS. Unified System will need to manage multiple unique identifiers to be effective.
- Data Quality - There will be an ongoing effort required to assess the data quality from the participating systems and steps taken to improve the quality over time.
- Business Plan/Ownership - Any system development effort on a large scale (i.e., state level) requires a solid business plan to identify resource requirements, funding, etc.
- Data Sharing Agreements - Through the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, there was progress in establishing these relationships. Data sharing agreements may have to become more granular and involved as the Unified System development moves forward.

- Governance - Also through the Early Learning Challenge, there was a governance structure that was recommended. One of key risks identified in the governance structure area is that there are parallel efforts underway (i.e., Framework Project) and that there may be gaps, instances of overlap, or even areas where the efforts are contradictory. Those issues need to be identified and resolved.
- Communication & Collaboration - Since the Unified System is bringing multiple agencies and programs together, there is potential for groups to be left out as plans move forward. Important for all to know what is going on, be offered the opportunity to participate, and have a chance to share their opinions. Ongoing communication and collaboration can be through the use of websites, blogs, meetings, focus groups, etc. and is required to ensure the sustainability of the system.

#### **c. Head Start Review**

This deliverable served as a good case study for communicating the potential of the Unified System along with discussing the perspective, priorities, and needs of a particular group within the broader IL early childhood community. Head Start involves about 50 grantees serving approximately 40,000 children across the state. HS has a robust and highly capable data system to collect early childhood data and manage programs. HS also has a collaborative structure established through the IL Head Start Association and the IL Head Start Collaboration Office. Those two groups served as points of contact for JSI and shared their concerns and desires regarding the Unified System. Some concerns were about data sharing and that they wanted to control access to their data. They also had a list of value-based requirements for the system, such as wanting the system to not impose any additional burden on top of the current reporting obligations and that the system will help to improve their efficiency.

#### **d. Next Steps**

Q4 is the RFI and RFP development process. JSI is going to help structure an RFI where the vendor community is asked to give feedback related to the 20 or so modules that make up the Unified System. JSI will also help to review those responses. A decision will have to be made as to what the first version of the Unified System will look like. It will probably be a subset of the defined modules providing some functionality and value to the community that will be using the system. Also, there needs to be a longer term view about what the three to five year picture might look like with the potential of adding additional modules. With formalizing those plans, it will lead to the development of a RFP, which will then lead to structured proposals from qualified vendors that could build and deliver the Unified System. Some of the funds from the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant will be used to begin building the system. (There is between one and two million dollars earmarked for that purpose.) Although it will not be enough money to do all the work that needs to be done, it should at least be enough to get started.

#### ***Feedback/Questions***

*Seems like there is also a risk of not getting buy-in from school districts and local providers and that they are key to data quality.*

*Value-based requirements (as mentioned in Head Start review) are important for all the stakeholders that are contributing data to the system. If those inputting data are feeling like they are getting*

*something back, they are going to be much more invested in making sure the data quality is maintained.*

*What is the timeframe for the RFI and RFP development?*

Q4 of the project goes from February to April. The RFI will be relatively easy since it will not require any prioritizing, but the RFP is different. For the RFP, decisions will need to be made around what will be built in the first system's development effort.

*\*\*\* Just wanting to flag - there are issues under the IL Procurement Code that if people choose to participate in future conversations about the RFI/RFP development process for the Unified System that they may be excluded from bidding on the actual RFP. If that is an issue, you may not want to comment further or participate in upcoming meetings.*

*When reading the deliverables, it seems as if the Unified System is a point-in-time system where it only has one record for the child and very little history about the child, family, staff member contact, etc. If this is going to feed into research and be useful for the agencies, some historical saving of the records seems like it would be very important.*

JSI's expectation is that the database will be structured as a relational database that has all of the indices and linkages necessary to provide a complete historical view of the child from birth to five. Similar database structures are being made at ISBE where they are looking to provide this historical record from 0 to 20. There is every expectation that those requirements are going to be part of the RFP. JSI agreed to make this point clearer in the deliverables.

*Usage of terminology - "meta-data" vs. "aggregate data"*

Tom Szyrka will send the definitions of the terms currently being used by multiple state agencies to JSI.

*Interesting issue – the tension between policy and program where the needs at a policy level are almost easier to meet (i.e., with batch file data). From a program/provider perspective, the benefit of answering those policy questions isn't always as obvious. Although moving toward answering the policy questions is an essential part of this effort, it is clearly not everything. Program/providers may have needs that go beyond that of the policy questions. That is something that will need to be addressed even if the first version of the system doesn't get to that level of detail. Ultimately, the goal is to be useful to program providers.*

#### **4. Action Items from 1/28 Meeting**

##### ***Committee Membership Overlap***

One attachment sent around for the meeting is an itemization of membership on other committees. If there is any updating that is necessary, please send to staffer. Hopefully, this represents a complete understanding of who in this committee is also participating on other committees.

##### ***Communication Form***

At the last meeting, there was also discussion about members participating in other meetings and that they would report back about what is going on in the other committees. Members said that they would like a form, although there is no obligation to use it. A draft Communication Form was circulated that would allow members participating on other bodies to report back on what they experienced and that it would go to our staffer. Any comments or feedback about the form can also be sent to staffer.

### ***Taxonomy for Research/Evaluation Database***

IECAM has some notes and suggested terms to use. They were developed by using the Ounce's National Policy Digest documents as the base for some terms and methods of searching for this proposed database. A meeting will be set with co-chairs and IECAM to discuss these ideas and then the work will be presented at the next DRE Committee meeting.

### ***Continue Relationship Building with ICEPR***

The in-person meeting for the Illinois Collaborative for Education Policy Research (ICEPR) had to be cancelled due to inclement weather and a brief webinar about ILDS was held instead. Co-chairs and/or staffer plan on attending the next meeting in April.

### ***Additional Resource***

Website for CEDS – <https://ceds.ed.gov>. Tool called Connect that will allow you to select certain policy question, indicators, and metrics. It tells you what data is necessary to answer those questions against that data model. The Unified System and ILDS are being based on that standard.

### ***Other Action Items from 1/28 Meeting***

- ☐ ***Email link of job description for Data and Outcomes Manager at OECD to committee***
- ☐ ***Reach out to Harriet Dichter about criteria for evaluating the quality of research/evaluation reports***

### **ACTION ITEMS FROM 3/5 MEETING:**

- ☐ ***Members will send JSI feedback about the deliverables, including definitions related to “meta-data” and “aggregate data”***
- ☐ ***Set the next meeting to update the committee on RFI/RFP development process***
- ☐ ***Members will send staffer feedback about the Communication Form and Committee Membership Overlap document***
- ☐ ***Co-chairs/IECAM meet to discuss development of the taxonomy***
- ☐ ***Add presentation of taxonomy ideas to the next meeting agenda***
- ☐ ***Send link of CEDS resource to the committee***